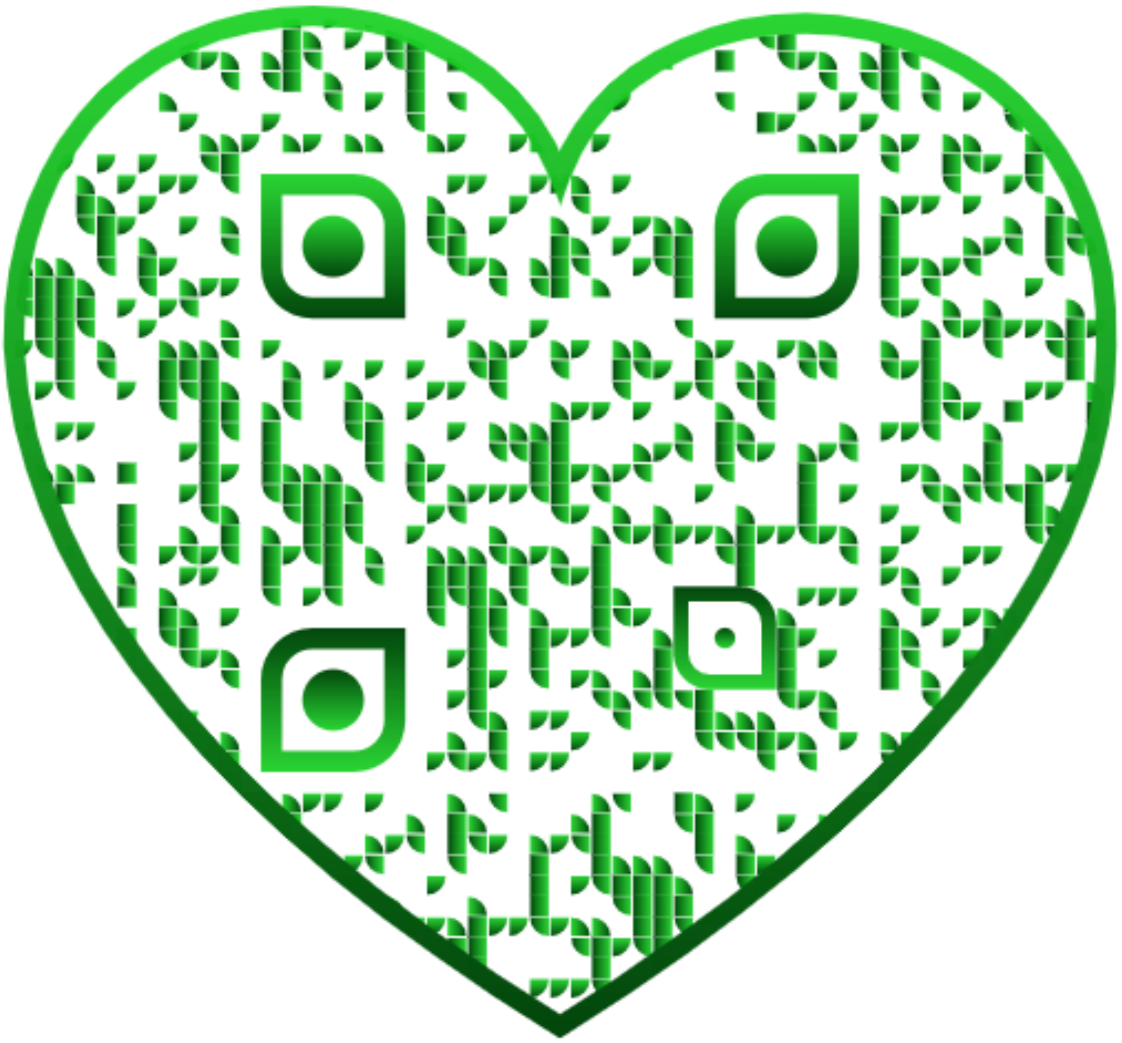
ALIVE / WORLDWIDE
KISS
1996 - 1997



January 8th, 1974 (left to right): Original manager Joyce Biawitz, Peter, Paul, Casablanca Records President Neil Bogart, Gene, Ace, original manager Bill Aucoin.

NOW AND FOREVER

It says everything about the stature of make-up era KISS that the stack heels they first stepped into back in 1973 have never come close to being filled. ★ When New York's finest capped the first decade of their career with a trip to Brazil that saw them playing in front of 300,000 rabid fans (their last outing in make-up and costume—until now!), they found themselves so far

1973–4

ahead of the rest that there was simply no one to pass the baton to. ★ This was the end of Phase One in the 20-plus career of a band who have perennially proved—in more ways than one—that size does indeed count, a band who didn't just flush the existing rulebook as much as write a completely new one—a "Bible" of self-belief that remains widely well-thumbed to this day, with the chapter on "backstage photography" a particular fave. ★ You have to believe that in years to come, when the history of Rock 'n' Roll (and indeed the entertainment industry in general) is finally etched onto parchment in the higher corridors of learning, the KISS name and logo—with its long-standing lightening-bolt "S's"—will be gold leafed for posterity with particular prominence and pride. ★ After all, this wasn't just another pavement-to-penthouse saga; this was The Great American Dream in all its multi-flavored glory, a Barnum-esque burn-up to the stars that boldly went where no (show)man had been before, leaving the jaded and the joyless gasping for breath

1978

in a vapour trail of fire, brimstone, and unrepentant flash. ★ "KISS" ('74), "Hotter Than Hell" ('74), "Dressed To Kill" ('76), the first three releases saw KISS dramatically setting out its stall, but it was '75's Alive!—regarded by all right-minded folk as one of the greatest road records ever—that was the watershed, a double album perfectly capturing the band in full, flared-nostril flow. ★ You could smell the greasepaint and just about make out the roar of the crowd above the sound of critics eating HUMBLE pie...for lo there were those who spake out against the mammon, the make-up (omnipresent) and the music (proud to be LOUD). In a music world where pop was king, surely there could be no place for these Caped Crusaders and their Xtravagant ways...? Well, actually there was and is... ★ Like the Beatles before them, KISS were a real gang-of-four with no weak links, every guy had his own individual look (and his own solo album—released on the same day in Sept. '78),

allowing fans to both follow the group as a whole and attach their special favour to whichever headstock or drumstick they desired. ★ There was Gene Simmons, "The DEMON," breathing fire and spitting blood, the black heart of the band, his on-stage persona heavily fueled by his great love of horror films/comix in all their ghoulish glory. There was Paul Stanley, "The Starchild," consummate performer, preaching the glory of ROCK AND ROLL to the wild-eyed believers, dancing as though in possession of the ability to defy gravity and hang suspended in midair, someone who never needed the make-up to put a star around his eye. Peter Criss, "The Cat," the man behind the million-selling "Beth" (76), and the man atop the KISS drumkit, invariably ridden bronco-style into the lights at the climax of the show. And finally Ace Frehley, "The Spaceman," "Mr. Excitement," a street-smart character with a rocket-firing guitar and an armour-piercing laugh.

1976

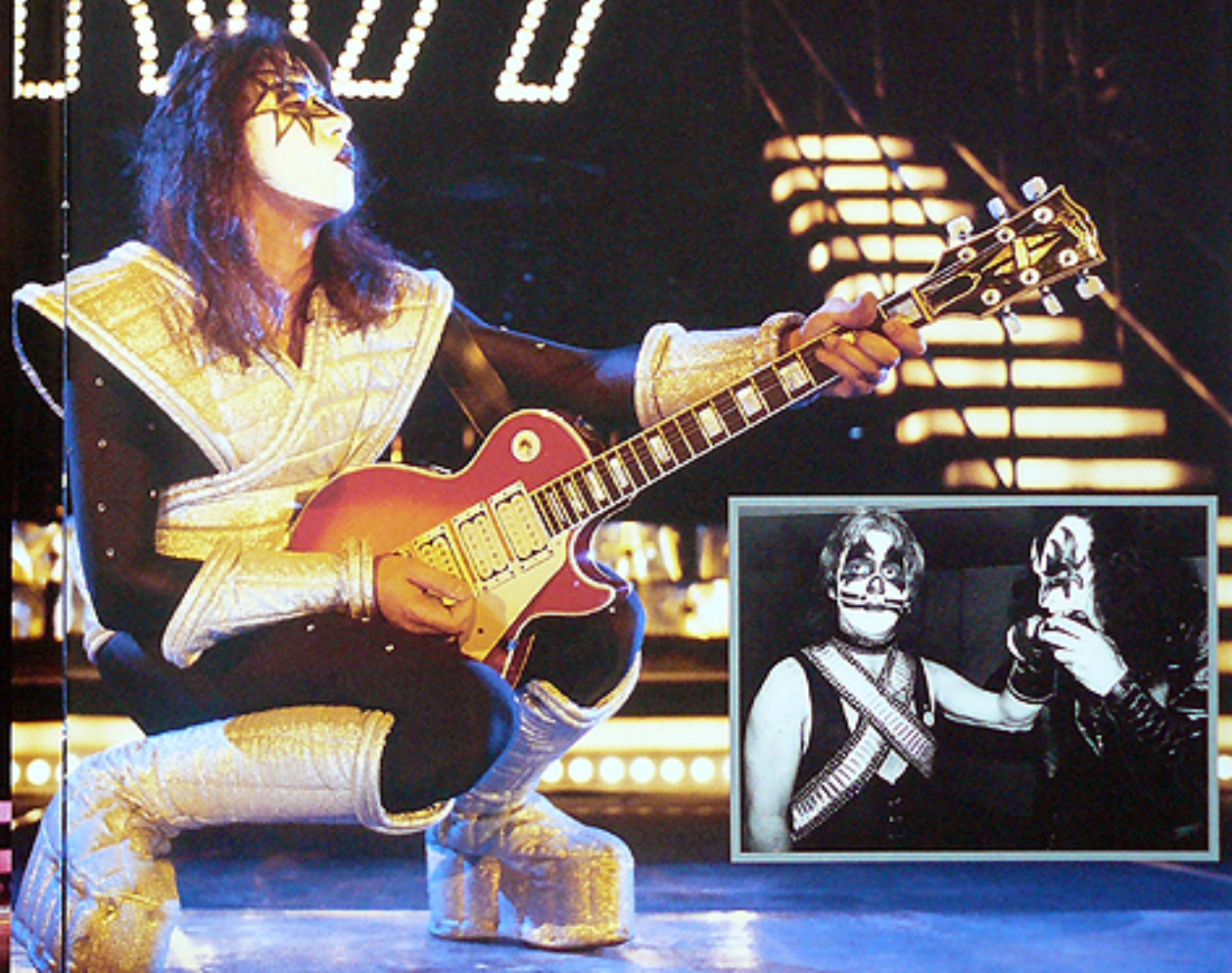
1977

★ The sleeve of the DESTROYER album ('76) depicted this Fantastic Four as conquering Lords of the Waste-land, charging over a suitably torrid-looking terrain. But what you couldn't see—presumably just out of frame—was the ever-attendant legion of fans, the famed KISS ARMY loyal to The Greater Cause and delighted today that these original partners in crime are once again together, and in prime smash-and-grab mood to boot! ★ Fanatical support of this kind, however, does demand a particular kind of vigilance, a way of protecting followers from cheap (and sometimes not so cheap) imitations. As a result, the band had no choice but to take the whole fan club/business side under their leather-coated wing, a magnanimous approach that clearly set a pattern for others to follow—with a few at least—it did CAUSE a certain amount of confusion as to what the group was really about...as in attitude and

music! ★ The simple truth is: were it not for the consistency of the KISS musical catalogue (as in Great Songs!), the band could have split the atom onstage night after night and it wouldn't have made a speck of difference. Drawing from classic rather than contemporary influences, the Founding Four—and of course the later Gene and Paul-led line-up—delivered hit albums and singles with an amazing sureness of touch, FOREVER adding new elements and revitalizing old ones. ★ The rock-disco rumble of I Was Made for Lovin' You ('79), the pure pop sheen of the Unmasked LP ('80), the conceptual feast of (Music From) The Elder ('81), there was certainly no laurel-resting going on here. Music has always been (and continues to be) the prime motivation, the rest simply the icing—though I trust this will be laid on THICKER and with suitably explosive

1978

KISS



candles now that everyone's back for serious second helpings! ★ On a balmy Brazilian night in 1983 the make-up came off, partly because people had stopped telling the band to do so, and partly because there were extra-curricular activities that needed to be pursued, new **CHALLENGES** to be met. Now the focus is back where it began, the time is ripe for a return to roots. The Reunion genuinely in demand. KISS, let's face it, are the reason why so many of today's acts felt moved to get together in the first place; most have a cherished KISS cover lurking somewhere up their sleeve, and all would no doubt admit that, in this context at least, they "Are not worthy."★ Bands and fans alike will truly savour this moment. For those who still enjoy the **SMELL** of flashbombs in the morning, and for those who still want the best...you've got it! ★ Welcome back...and bombs away!

1979

– Dante Benattio

MAY 9th, 1996

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